Iron County Register

BY ELI D. AKE.

IRONTON. - - MISSOURI.

THE OLD WHAT-NOT.

In a quiet parlor, dim, and rich, and rare,
Is a quaint old what-not I hold dear.
Standing in the corner, prim and stiff and high,
Holding treasures, gathered far and near.

As I linger near it, with my every thought
In a peaceful, proud and happy strain,
Shall I try to tell you, in a simple way,
What these precious, burdened shelves contain?

First a little rattle, with its bands of pearl,
And one tiny, tinkling golden bell:
Last of six! I keep it as a precious gift,
Why I prize it, little tooth prints tell.

Then a coral necklace with a jeweled clasp,
Brought from sunny India's distant strand;
Rings of different sizes, costly, quaint and old,
That have graced a dimpled baby hand.

Pretty, loving keepsakes, coins, and shells, and books,
Dainty little pictures, fair and sweet;
From the first shelf upward, count the meaning gifts,
And the chain of birthdays is complete.

Photographs, a dozen, queer and faded; some,
With the sweet, old-timey simple dress.
Though each fleeting birthday changed the little form,
Tenderly to each my lips I press.

Do you listen, wondering why I fondly smile,
Why no sad, regretful tear drops fall?
See that portrait smiling from its gilded frame,
With the manly form so brave and tall;

With the handsome features, and the regal brow,
And the smiling eyes? They are the same!
Just a grown-up baby, with a holy life,
Written on the highest scrolls of fame.

Would you grieve and sorrow if a lovely bud,
Full of perfumed beauty all untold,
Growing in your garden, slowly should expand,
And to all its loveliness unfold?

Thus in proud remembrance do I smile at these
Sacred treasures of the happy past;
May the dear old what-not, faithful to its charge,
Keep each birthday token till the last.

—*Margaret A. Oldham, in N. Y. Sun.*

STORY OF AN OLD COAT.

A Dreadful and Yet a Blessed Thing to Happen.

"What in the world is that queer-looking old thing hanging out in the yard?" asked Ned.

The dining-room in which the Ware family were seated at breakfast commanded a view of a little, green-sodded back yard, which on this morning presented a striking appearance. Garret and closets had been emptied of their contents, and every thing in the way of woolens, clothing, or bedding, new or old, good, bad, or indifferent, brought out by thrifty hands to take a bath of the streaming sunshine.

"Which queer-looking thing do you mean?" asked his sister Pearl. "The whole yard looks like a crazy-quilt, I'm sure."

"Like a crazy-quilt struck by lightning, I should say!" said Ned. "But I mean that old coat with the streaks and spots all over it."

"That old coat?" His father looked out. "Bless my heart, Aunt Margaret, is that my Washington coat?"

"Yes, my dear, indeed it is."

"I thought it had gone the way of all coats many a year ago—if, indeed, I thought of it at all. Ah, Aunt Margaret, to think of your setting me to play George Washington!"

"You did it well, my dear," said the sweet-faced little old lady, with an affectionate smile at the handsome middle-aged man which told that she still regarded him as her boy.

Ned had run out, and now came in wearing the coat, the long collar and the buttons of which were covered with faded yellow satin, while the skirts were ornamented with reverse of the same.

"You don't look as your father did in it," said Aunt Margaret, eying him critically.

"Oh, of course not," said Ned, putting on an abused air. "Nobody ever looks like father. When you and father begin to hold a session of your admiration society no one else has a chance."

"But," said Pearl, curiously examining the old coat, "do tell us about it. Who wore it? If Ned hadn't such a green look himself he would look as if he had stepped out of an old picture."

"Go on, go on!" said Ned. "Has any one any more complimentary remarks to make about me?"

"I wore it," said his father, "but I was not the only one, more's the pity. Dear me, Aunt Margaret! how it brings the old time back! Do you remember your good old father that night?"

"What a dreadful thing to happen! But what a blessing!" said Aunt Margaret, with a laugh and a shake of the head.

"A dreadful thing and a blessing!" exclaimed Pearl. "Do some body go on and tell. Is it your story or father's, Aunt Margaret?"

"Both, I think," said her father. "The coat in its present shape first saw the light when I was a sub-freshman in college—let me see, twenty-three years ago—living with Aunt Margaret and her father, 'the old doctor,' we boys called him. How we all loved the good old man! He was really no relative of mine, for Aunt Margaret, you know, was only my mother's half-sister; but no one could be kinder than he was to me. He had had a professorship in the college for many a year, but in those times was getting very old, and his duties had been assumed by one of the younger professors, but so gradually that it had taken him a good while to realize that he was receiving a salary without performing much duty. Then all of a sudden he resigned. There was quite a fuss about it, for the college dignitaries had intended to keep him in office until he might be called to a higher place, but he would not hear of it. It left him very poor, for he had always been too liberal to have saved much. But in these stirring days of money-getting and money-spending it is always a refreshment to me to look back upon such a picture of the beauty and sweetness and dignity of honorable poverty."

"How did Aunt Margaret look in those times, father?" said Pearl, patting her great-aunt's face.

"Her cheeks were red and her eyes were bright, and she looked as fresh and as blooming and as pretty as—as she does now."

"One of your father's few faults as a boy, Pearl, my dear," said Aunt Margaret, with dignity, "was a tendency to exaggeration in speech, and you observe that he is not yet cured of it. Yes, indeed," she went on, "I remember those were pinching days. And seemed all the worse because of that dreadful loss, Edward. My father, children, in his early manhood had chanced to buy a piece of Western land which he had held and held because he never thought of its being worth selling, until, in just about the time of his greatest need, he received an offer of a good price for it. And I never shall forget the beaming face with which the dear old man told me of how the Lord had been seeing to it all these years that he should not come to want or dependence in his old age.

"Well, he had been for some years getting rather absent-minded, and failing in his memory. He made mistakes, which he was always the first to laugh at, and I got into the way of keeping a pretty close lookout in all important matters. But things sometimes escaped me, and one evening he said to me:

"'By the way, Margaret, have you quite decided that it is best for us to buy that bank stock in New York?'

"'I believe so, father,' I said, 'when the money comes.'

"'Oh, it has come,' he said. 'I received some days ago the certificate of deposit for nine thousand dollars. I'll show it to you. It's a little bit of paper for so much money!' He began opening drawers in his study-table. 'It's here—no, in this desk—or I might have slipped it under this pile of papers—or, no—perhaps I laid it in one of these books, to be quite sure it was safe.'

"He was nervously turning over one thing and another, and I grew more and more frightened as I helped him in the search. He had a fashion of putting things away so safely that they might be found in months or years, or never.

"'What *could* you have done with it, father?' I said at last, as he stood still, with an expression of helpless bewilderment.

"He stared at me as I stared in dismay at him, and said:

"'Indeed, my dear, I don't know.'

"Well, it would be no use trying to tell how my heart misgave me from that moment—how I hunted and hunted, week after week, before I gave up in despair. My poor father never said much except once, shaking his head: 'It's for you that I care, Margaret.'

"But I could see how a look of anxiety, such as had never been there before, settled over his dear face and his hair grew whiter and thinner."

"But," said Pearl, "I don't quite understand. Was it a loss, losing the paper? Papa lost a check some time ago, and I remember that, after a little waiting and trouble about it, he got another one—didn't you, papa?"

"Yes, dear, but this was different. A certificate of deposit is a paper certifying that such a person has deposited such a sum in a bank. It is the only thing which gives him a right to reclaim the money, so the loss is serious."

"Still," said Ned, "wouldn't it make it right for such a person as the old doctor to swear that it was really lost? Then the bank folks could be sure of its never coming up again."

"Yes, if he were the only person concerned. But, you see, nobody could know whether the certificate might not have fallen into other hands, and might be turning up months or years afterward. More than one friend of the doctor stood ready to secure the bank against any such demand, but his sturdy independence came in there, too."

"Now—have we come to the coat?" asked Ned, with an impatient air.

"I believe so," said his father, smiling. "How long after that was it, Aunt Margaret?"

"Indeed, I don't know, dear. But how well I remember the day you came rushing up to my room"—

"As I always did when I was in a tight place! Yes, the college boys had all been invited by the wife of one of the faculty to an evening entertainment. It was always a pleasant place to go. But on the afternoon of the same day the lady sent word to me that she was arranging a set of historical tableaux, that a young gentleman whom she was expecting from a distance was to have borne the character of George Washington, but he had disappointed her, and she begged to know if I could take the part. I was so bare of ways and means that the news struck dismay to my very heart, but of course my first impulse was to tear up to Aunt Margaret's room.

"'What shall I do?' I said as soon as I could get my breath after telling her. I thought she would shake her head in token of its being a hopeless case, but she didn't. She took a few moments to think, and I gathered fresh courage with every moment, for I knew well of old that when Aunt Margaret gave her mind to any thing it was sure to work out something.

"She hunted out an old picture, and studied it.

"'Wig, knee-pants, buckles, facings, ruffles—well, dear, if we are not very exact, people will not criticise very closely. I believe I can get up something for you if you are not too particular.'

"'Of course you can, Aunt Margaret. No, I'm not a bit particular; I'll wear any thing you say.'

"'Wait a minute,' she said. She ran up to the garret and brought down a broadcloth coat.

"'This was father's last coat before the one he has now. He wore it long after I thought it not fit for him—ah me!'

"I knew well enough why she sighed; and how in my heart I wished I could clothe the dear old man in cloth of gold—supposing he would have worn it! 'Put this on, Edward.' I tried it on.

"'It fits as if it were made for you,' she said, in great satisfaction. 'And it has a delightfully old-fashioned look—the lapels turn back so low, you see!' Then she examined it more critically.

"'I really do believe, Edward,' she said, solemnly, 'that this coat looks better than the one father got last—that was poorer cloth, and it hurts me to see how shabby he looks when he conducts the services. Now I'll fix this for you, and after you are done with it I'll let father take another wear out of it. You go down town as fast as you can, and buy a sheet of silver paper.'

"Off I went, and by the time I was back, Pearl, she had the old coat metamorphosed. (I wonder if you will ever be such a needle-woman!) She had hunted out some pieces of that shiny yellow stuff—satin?—and there it was. She set me to cutting out card-board buckles and pasting the silver paper over them. A pair of my outgrown trousers were cut off at the knee, and she found me some long black stockings. The buckles, with huge bunches of ribbon, went on my low shoes and at the knees. I had ruffles at my wrist and up the front of my shirt, and a necktie big enough to choke me."

"If only you could have seen him, Pearl, when he tried them on!" said Aunt Margaret.

"'But the wig, Aunt Margaret,' I said," continued Mr. Ware. "'I've seen wigs of cotton batting, but they don't look just right.'

"'No,' she said, 'they don't. But I've thought of something better.'

"Up to the garret she went again, and brought down an old muff. And out of that muff came a wad of curly gray hair, coarse when you look closely at it, but looking well enough for evening wear. And how she did work over that wig!"

"It was the hardest part of it," chimed in Aunt Margaret. "I kept at it until it was dusk, and had to send the coat down to the kitchen to be pressed by Maria Green, a young girl I had there to help, although I should have preferred doing it myself—but time was too pressing. I barely managed to get the boy off and then to dress myself and go with father to the company."

"And did the tableaux pass off well?" asked Pearl.

"Very well indeed."

"But," said Ned, "I thought you spoke of some thing dreadful happening."

"And a blessing," said Pearl.

"Not that night," said Aunt Margaret. "The next morning I was sent for to go to see a dear friend living some miles distant, who was ill. I remained with her all day, only getting back in time for the evening service at the college chapel. My father and your father were both gone and I hurried after them. As I came near our pew I saw that some one was speaking to father, and guessed at once that they wanted him to lead the service, as often happened. He got up and walked forward to the platform, on which was a small desk. He sat for a moment on the seat behind it, looking over some hymns, and as he did so I saw him put his hand in his pocket for his handkerchief. And how *do* you think I felt when he pulled out, not his handkerchief, but a bunch of something which the next moment I saw, to my perfect horror, was that wig of Edward's!"

"Wig!" exclaimed Ned.

"In his *pocket?*" asked Pearl.

"Yes, indeed. He looked at it with the half-puzzled, half-dreamy glance that I well knew meant that all his thoughts were far away on other things, and put it back. Then he arose and began taking off his overcoat. You may believe I was watching him rather anxiously after I had seen the wig. As he unbuttoned the coat I caught sight of a yellow gleam. He slowly pulled off one sleeve, then the other, and, oh, Pearl! oh, Ned! he stood there with George Washington's coat on!"

"Aunt Margaret!"

"What did he do?"

"I think," Aunt Margaret shook her head solemnly, "that if it had been any one else, those college boys would have whooped and stamped and clapped hands, for they were all there, and a good many of the neighbors besides, who were in the habit of coming in. There was a sensation, a whisper, and a stir went round, but not a boy was there who would have thought of such a thing as really making fun of the old doctor. His back had been turned to the light as he took the overcoat off, and as he again faced us I could see that for the first moment he didn't realize. Then his eyes fell on the yellow facings, and a half smile came over his dear old face, and he gave a glance towards us, as frank and sweet as a child's, as if he would have said: 'You see, boys, I have made a mistake somehow.' I tell you, children, George Washington never looked grander than he, with his crown of silver hair and his gentle dignity which forbade any thing unbefitting the sacred time and place. He quietly put on his overcoat again, buttoning it closely over the yellow trimmings, and then, as his voice arose, the words came like a solemn announcement:

"'God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform.'

And in the hush which followed no one thought of fun."

Pearl and Ned drew a deep breath.

"It *was* dreadful," said Pearl.

"Business! business!" said Mr. Ware, looking at his watch. "You must tell the rest of the story, Aunt Margaret."

He hurried away, while Pearl asked: "How did it come about?"

"I suppose it wouldn't have taken place if I had been at home. Your father, on coming in the evening before, had hung his George Washington coat in a hall closet in which my father's coat always hung, and in the shade of the evening, as he made ready for the service, he had got hold of the wrong one.

"And how your father did feel as he tried to apologize for being the cause of such a blunder! But my father did not take it hard at all; and of course nobody really was in fault—it was one of the ridiculous things which never can be foreseen.

"Well, the next day was Saturday, and I remember—how strange it is how we remember little things!—your father was sitting in the room with me, studying his Senectude, as I began ripping the trimmings off the coat, to sponge it up for father to wear. I was just congratulating on its fine looks, and thinking it would do him good service, and what a real providence it was that it should have been brought into notice, when in one place the cloth seemed to give way in my hands. I looked, and, to my great discouragement, found a place in one of the front skirts burnt through and through. The yellow satin had covered it before.

"Your father came and looked at it in dismay.

"'What an unlucky wight I am!' he groaned. 'What else, I wonder, will come of my wearing that coat?'

"Just then Maria Green happened to pass through the room, and when she saw what we were looking at she put her apron up to her eyes and sniffed dolefully.

"'Yes'm,' she said, 'I've been a-tryin' ever since to come and tell you about it, but hadn't no courage fer to do it, and knowed you'd be a-findin' it yerself soon enough any ways. Ye'sm—and me a-tryin' fer to do it my very best fer Mr. Edward, and the iron a-bein' too hot'—poor Maria sniffed louder than ever, till I had to coax and comfort her about it, and get her back to her work in the kitchen.

"'Can't be mended, can it?' asked your father.

"'No,' said I, 'it's right on one of the skirts. Dear me! how good it must be to be folks that wear great big patches on their clothes and don't mind! I might as well let the satin stay on now, Edward. Perhaps you'll want to masquerade again some time.'

"'You needn't think I'll ever wear it again,' he said.

"But I began sewing on what I had ripped, wondering where I *could* look next for a coat for father. Presently I felt something between the lining and the outside, and drew out a bit of folded paper which I saw must have slipped down from the inside breast pocket. It had taken its share of the scorching, and was so small that I was about to throw it down, but first unfolded and looked at it. And then I sprang up and stared into your father's face, till he said:

"'What in the world is the matter now, Aunt Margaret? Any thing else gone wrong with that coat?'

"And he followed me closely as I ran into father's study and cried:

"'See, father! what is this?'

"He looked, and then I saw his hands tremble as he took off his glasses, wiped them, and looked again.

"'It is the certificate of deposit,' he said.

"Your father gave a shout and jump, and then took both my hands—the saucy varlet!—and danced me round and round as if I had been a girl.

"'It's all your doing, Aunt Margaret,' he cried. 'If you hadn't been so jolly about fixing up that rig for me, it never would have happened.'

"'No, it's your doing, Edward,' said I. 'If you hadn't wanted the coat, it would have been hanging in the garret now.'

"But my father raised his hands, and what a light there was in his dear old faded eyes!

"'It is the Lord's doings,' he said, solemnly. 'Margaret, only last week I saw that the bank in which we were going to invest this had failed. If we had carried out our intentions this would have been lost indeed, but He has had it in safe keeping for us.'

"For, you see, my dears, I had happened (if there is any such thing as happening, which my father always declared there wasn't) to hang the old coat in the garret just after the certificate had been put in the pocket, and there it stayed—safe, indeed!

"Well, I hurried to the kitchen to delight poor Maria by telling her of her share, a very important one, in the happy discovery; and that is all about the old coat, except that I have had a kind of a tender feeling for it ever since."

"I don't wonder at that," said Pearl, affectionately stroking the faded satin. "I suppose your father had a new one."

"Indeed he did. Edward and I both went to have a voice in the matter when the cloth was selected. Edward declared he looked as well as Washington and all the other Revolutionary heroes rolled into one when he had it on. The first time he wore it to church he was called upon to assist in the service. And when we were at dinner afterward Edward asked him:

"'Didn't you feel very much dressed up in your new coat, sir?'

"He glanced up at him with his kindly smile, but with the far away look in his eyes which was growing upon him very fast:

"'Coat, my dear boy? Have I a new coat? Ah, sure enough, so I have!'

"'And didn't you feel fine in it today, father?' I said.

"'Indeed, my dear,' he answered, slowly shaking his head, 'I really forgot all about it.'"—*Sydney Dayre, in Christian Union.*

A Husband's Solicitude.

Robinson—So you are going to Europe, Brown?

Brown—Yes, for a couple of months. I haven't been very strong lately, and I think the trip will do one good.

Robinson—I hope so. Mrs. Brown will accompany you, of course?

Brown—N—no; my wife has complained of not feeling very strong recently, and I'm afraid to have her undertake the trip.—*The Epoch.*

—A sort of horse kindergarten has been established in New York City for the purpose of training horses for the Fire Department. The system is based on the principles of induction and object-teaching, and is dominated by absolute and unremitting kindness. The whip is never used. The horses learn rapidly, like their work, and become as enthusiastic in "running with the machine" as the old volunteer firemen were in their palmiest days.

FARMERS' DAUGHTERS.

How They Can Make Money Without Leaving the Old Homestead.

Rural pursuits offer many attractions which promise more profit than can be found in or drawn from many of the occupations which are regarded essentially feminine. While the farm-house presents to willing hands a varied round of duties, the garden, the orchard, the dairy and the poultry-yard seem to us fields of remunerative enterprise awaiting those who enter them. Young girls just emancipated from school weary of what they regard as the dullness of country life, and according to their tastes and attainments seek occupation in office or gravitate to factory life. Shops swallow up a few, and city and village stores engulf thousands and tens of thousands. The wages of sewing girls are proverbially small; the hours in store are long, and though the work is termed light it is dull and monotonous from year to year. Many are the hardships of working girls, yet all of these are braved, cheerfully at first, by countless generations of young women who prefer an aimless life of unrestricted freedom to the fulfillment of home duties and the trammels of every-day family intercourse.

Long ago the baking and the manufacture of many necessaries were one and all home duties; nowadays the baker is a man, who sells dyspeptic buns and oleomargarine pastries to his unhappy customers, and from his profits keeps fast horses. In the place of wholesome preserves the tables of the multitude are served with canned fruits, put up in the cheapest manner in factories. Women of to-day have to contend for existence under the pressure of a severely restricted area of usefulness, the confines of which grow narrower and narrower as years pass on. This condition of life is due in part to the wider ambition and superior capacity of men, who little by little have taken to themselves the filling of the places formerly occupied by women, not themselves as workers, but as employers; and as women work cheaper than men, these unwise ones are to-day in the ranks of the great wage-earning population of the world, when once they were the honored heads of home-life. To go back to old methods is impossible, still a remnant can be saved, and young girls can be led to see that preserving apples in "mother's" kitchen is not harder work than bottling pickles in a factory; that dairy work on their father's farm is not worse than standing twelve hours a day in a store, to earn from three to seven dollars a week.

There is a widespread want unsupplied for the luxuries of country life; the two most sought for and most difficult to obtain are the products of the dairy and the poultry-yard. Farmers are said to be grasping; we think otherwise, as they, for lack of ambition, sell their milk to dealers and creameries. If the farmers' daughters made as good butter and cheese as their grandmothers did, there would be no need of protective milk associations; if farmers' daughters used incubators and raised and fattened poultry, the present dearth of plump chickens and fat capons would cease. Last March broiling chickens sold wholesale at thirty-eight cents per pound, and the same month capons reached twenty-eight cents per pound. These are remunerative prices, and better rates could be obtained by serving first-class hotels and restaurants. Dairy butter sold down to eighteen cents per pound last March, when more than one owner of dairy cows, through superior skill as a producer, and greater enterprise as a merchant, received one dollar per pound for butter, and his eager customers clamored for more.

Farming is said not to pay; farmers are always poor. Now just let the girls step in and see if they can not make as good butter as the great creameries put on the market, and when they do, fathers, see to it that your daughters have their just share of your increased profit. It is "the ready penny," the actual possession of money, that we all desire, and this universal longing sends girls to the mill, the factory, and the store. Farmers' daughters who remain at home are fed and clothed but rarely paid for their service. This is what so frequently discourages them. Then again many girls lack manual skill, and at home receive no training which tends to diminish this evil. They know nothing, therefore they "go out." The woman who would most benefit her sex would be the one who, having the means at her command, will place within the reach of farmers' daughters an education which would enable them to gain a comfortable living in the area of country pursuits. She would be a benefactress in two ways, as she would thin the ranks of wage earners and open new fields of industry to worthily ambitious women.—*American Agriculturist.*

Father Weller Contradicted.

If I had a son of an age to marry I think I should advise him to take a widow; she would never make any mistakes, social or otherwise, and the chances are that she would make him much happier than a young girl, because, having served an apprenticeship, she would know how to manage him without his ever dreaming that that was her way of making life smooth. She would never object to a cross word unless she found he was the kind of a man who enjoyed the excitement of a little row once in a while, and she would be ready to affirm (no woman likes to swear) that he was ever so much nicer than the man she was first married to; and she would coo about that being "the mistake of her girlhood, and this "the riper, truer love of her womanhood;" men like that sort of thing—it has the same effect on them as a good glass of Burgundy; it makes the blood in their veins seem warmer and younger.—*Bab, in N. Y. Star.*

—This is the age of championships, and Chicago, not to be outdone by other cities, comes to the front with a prize chicken-dresser, who claims that he can prepare one hundred scalded chickens for the market in fifteen minutes and fifty seconds.

FOR OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

TEN LITTLE PIGS.

Ten little pigs that grow and thrive,
Rosy and plump and clean;
Two little pens, each holding five,
And the owner is Baby 'Gene.
They wriggle about, and root and dig,
And push again and again,
Till at last we find one dear little pig
Is out of the little red pen.

Baby 'Gene is a little old man,
Bald and serious, too.
He looks to the pigs whenever he can,
But he has a great deal to do.
And this little pig says he'll get some corn,
And the next one cries: "O where?"
And the little one says: "In grandpa's barn!"
And the great one knows it's there.

Four pearly grains he can plainly see;
Have them he must and will;
He strains and struggles—but "quee—quee—quee"
He can't get over the sill!
So he's given it up, and off he goes,
(With Grandfather 'Gene before),
Snubbing and rubbing his little bare nose
On the way to the pantry door.

You queer little pig, you're ever so bold,
But it never, never will do!
The great wide world would be cruel and cold
To a little pink mite like you.
Mamma must bring her needle and yarn
And build up the fence again,
For the five little pigs would be quite forlorn
Outside of the little red pen.

—*Eudora S. Bumstead, in Youth's Companion.*

ARCTIC BOYS AND GIRLS.

Their Merry Times, and How They Amuse Themselves—Limited Games and Sports.

"I wonder what the arctic boys and girls do when the nights are so long and so cold? They don't sleep all the time—do they, Aunt Martha?"

Inquisitive little Benny looked up from the arctic picture in the book open in Aunt Martha's lap, and there was irresistible force in his appeal.

"No, indeed, Benny," answered Aunt Martha. "You must know that some of the nights in the far North are nearly six months long, and the little children of the snow could not sleep all that time."

"But what have they to play with? Uncle Toby told me once that they have no skates, but he did not tell me much more. It would not be very fine to live where there is ice and snow all the time, and to have no fun."

Aunt Martha smiled.

"The arctic boys and girls see some merry times if they do live in a bleak, cold country," she replied. "While they have no books with which to pass away the hours of the long nights, as other and more favorable children do, they have toys and games."

"Tell me about them," cried Benny.

"Very well. Some years ago Elisha Kent Kane, the arctic traveler, wrote much about the children of the regions which he visited. Since then other explorers have added to Dr. Kane's account until we know a good deal about the boys and girls of the snow. The *igloo* which is the funny name of the ice-house of the Eskimo, is the narrow playground of the children when the snow is deep and the weather is bitter cold.

"The girls amuse themselves with queer-looking dolls whose heads may have been carved out of walrus ivory; for there is no wood where the long cold nights are. They dress these dolls in soft deer-skins, and take the ears of the arctic fox for doll-hoods. Sometimes these little ladies of the cold will go visiting just like the little misses of our country do; and when they go, they always take the doll along. Dolly rides in a sled which the girls, wrapped in their garments of bear-skin, pull over the snow in high glee. These visits are often made at night, and for hours a group of Eskimo girls will make an igloo resound with childish talk and laughter. They don't know any thing about the great world that lies warm and pleasant beyond the boundaries of their ice-locked home—nothing about the May parties, the forest festivals and the merry nuttings. They have no knowledge of the handsome dolls that fill the windows of our stores. An Eskimo girl would hold her breath if she could be transported to one of our toy-stores stocked with grand things for the holidays. They know nothing about these.

"When they learn to sew, it is with a sharp piece of ivory for a needle, and a sinew for a thread. It is slow work over the poor fire, which is never allowed to go out, on the hearth of the igloo, and the stitches are not very even; but the little seamstress works patiently, and the hours pass away. When she has dismissed her callers, she may think she can improve the looks of her doll. One of her visitors may have shown an improvement in doll fashions, and forthwith the arctic girl adds something to the costume of her own pet. And thus it goes. The Eskimo girls do not know the wilder sports indulged in by the boys; but for all this, they have very merry times—for God has designed that children shall be happy wherever he has placed them.

"The minds of the boys of the polar world run to sports that suits their natures. They are generally found in the open air, no matter how cold it is. At night, when the moon is full, and when the snow resembles a vast field of burnished silver, a company of Eskimo boys will engaged in a game of ball. The ball sometimes is as large as a boy's head, and is covered with a piece of hide sewed with sinews. Each boy carries a crooked stick, which is the rib-bone of some arctic animal; and thus accoutred, the whole company will play ball among the drifts till tired."

"Don't they ever lose the ball?" asked Benny.

"Very seldom. Now and then it is knocked into an opening in the ice, and, if it be a deep one, the little fellows go home sorrowful without their plaything. Then they get together in an ice-hut and make another ball. While it is being made they will tell wonderful stories, most of which are Eskimo legends learned from their parents. Now and then the most adventuresome boys will crawl along the high cliffs with a little net fastened to a pole made of spliced whalebones, and with it will catch the cliff swallows as they whirl about their heads.

"They learn early to drive dog-teams over the snow, and often under the moon they will race back and forth in this manner. The Eskimo boy is always a good driver, and he is not very old when he watches near the seal-holes with a harpoon. The seal, you know, Benny, furnishes the arctic people with food, clothing and light, and is perhaps the most important animal of the country. The boy who manages to spear a seal is a hero, and night after night recounts the story of his exploit to his companions by the igloo fire. His playthings, from the time when he first forms a taste for such, are rudely fashioned sledges, harpoons, boats and lances, and when alone will pass many hours with them.

"If the children of the snow have no skates, they have the grandest slides of the world. These are slides that never thaw out, and the sleds that glide down them are filled with the merriest children one can find anywhere. I don't know whether they would exchange their pleasures for those which Master Benny and his playmates enjoy. Their games and sports are limited, because their land is the land of ice and snow; but when they do play, they enter into it with all their might, and the white explorers who have watched them have been greatly amused.

"The far North land is one without picture-books; but the Eskimo boy will draw rude pictures on the skins that hang on the walls of the igloo. He draws no beds of flowers, because he sees none; his pictures represent the animals of the snow, and dog-trains, and ball-playing. So you see, Benny," finished Aunt Martha, "that the boys and girls of the snow have merry times, just like other little people. They never complain of their isolation, nor of their lot. They are patient and thankful for what they have, as we all should be; for the care of the Father is over them even in their land of endless winter."—*T. C. Harbaugh, in S. S. Times.*

A LETTER TO GIRLS.

Reading Aloud—A Pleasant and Useful Accomplishment, and a Charming Womanly Grace.

Another pleasant accomplishment of the quiet sort which I hope you may have is the ability to read aloud well. I do not allude now to what is usually termed elocution, in which too often naturalness is sacrificed to dramatic effect, when, as some one has said, the emphasis is scattered about in a sort of shot-gun fashion in the effort to be striking. It may be well enough to recite before large numbers, but many of you will have no special gift or inclination that way. On the other hand, each one may sometime be able to give great pleasure or add to the comfort of another by reading aloud. Reading quietly, naturally, without gestures, in well-modulated tones, what a charming, womanly grace it is!

You might not think it, but a physician of large practice once told me, that in many cases he knew of nothing more soothing and refreshing to his patients than the reading to them by some woman who had a sweet, sympathetic voice. I myself had the following experience. A friend suddenly became totally blind. After having known for years and years this beautiful world of nature, having looked on the faces of friends, having enjoyed books with the keenest appreciation, suddenly all was darkened with a darkness never to be lifted in this life. No hope of relief; she knew that henceforth she must grope her way. Well, it was a very little thing for me with my eyes, with all the abundance open to me which was shut out from her, to go to her every day for an hour of reading. You shoud have seen her sad face brighten, you should have heard her thankful words as she told how the thoughts stayed with her, and charmed the long, darkened hours. Was not my "cup of cold water" rewarded at once? Indeed it was; what was begun as a duty became my daily pleasure, and is now one of the most grateful of memories.

Now, girls, this might easily come to any one of you. There will always be the invalid or the blind, the children or the aged to whom reading aloud will be a beautiful ministry. Some day it may well happen that you may thus save a life from despair.

In the home, too, there are no happier hours than when the lamps are lit on a winter's night, and the fire glows, and the pleasant circle gathers with work in hand, while the voice of mother or daughter leads all the others to enchanted ground. This is also most improving. The stopping to talk it over, the discussion of the thought expressed, the looking up of places, the friction of mind with mind, all are inspiring. The memory is quickened, and you retain far more when the words are fixed by the voice, as well as by the eye. To do this you must be a sympathetic reader; you must understand your author, and truly interpret him; for the time you must put yourself in his place. You must have the quick eye which glances to the end of the sentence as you begin it, and grasps its meaning at a glance.

You will agree with me that other practice is needed besides what you get in school. Let me suggest a course at once profitable and delightful. Read aloud with some one friend. Select a book both wish to know, and read alternately. Let the dictionary lie open, and when there is doubt as to the meaning and pronunciation of a word, stop at once and look it up. You must be very good-natured about it, and sincerely desirous to improve, and not too sensitive about mistakes, or you will be impatient of criticism. But this course persisted in, will become a great pleasure and a great benefit.

I am sure my girls who aim to give happiness can not think over the suggestions of this letter without regarding reading aloud as another "opportunity."—*N. Y. Observer.*

—"Your Honor," said the vagrant who was pleading his own case, as he turned toward the judge's desk, "poverty ain't no crime, and a man hain't got to work in this free country if he don't want to. I'm as good a man as there is in this yer court-room, although I've lived for the last four days on nothin' but whisky and onions—"

"Prisoner," exclaimed the judge, hastily raising the window behind him, "address your remarks to the jury."—*Chicago Tribune.*